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MID-TERM REVIEWS OF COUNTRY AND INTERCOUNTRY PROGRAMMES

Mid-term review of the fourth country programme for Maldives

I. INTRODUCTION

1. The fourth country programme for Maldives was approved at the thirty-fifth session of the Governing Council (June 1988). The programme was based on resources of $3,633,800, from indicative planning figure (IPF) and Special Measures Fund for the Least Developed Countries (SMF/LDC) sources, for the four-year period 1988-1991. Available resources were subsequently increased to $5,452,444, with the release of additional IPF funds and increases in cost-sharing.

2. The country programme document focused United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) resources on three primary objectives: (a) skilled manpower development; (b) planning for decentralization; and (c) atoll development.

3. Project selection was based on previous experience, which showed that the most successful projects were those which concentrated on direct support and training; that small, undercosted projects usually did not achieve their goals or receive effective executing agency supervision; and that the viability of institution-building projects should be examined very carefully. The fourth country programme, consequently, consisted of a number of larger projects, covering a few themes of high priority.

4. The mid-term review of the fourth country programme was held on 14-15 March 1990, in two separate sessions. In the first session, policy issues and resource allocation were discussed under the chairmanship of the Director for External Resources, Ministry of Foreign Affairs. The meeting was attended by the Deputy Minister for Planning and Environment, his staff, and UNDP. The second session, on project implementation, was again chaired by the Director for External Resources, and attended by Ministry of Planning and Environment officials and UNDP,

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as well as representatives from the ministries in which UNDP-financed projects are active. These included the Ministry of Health, Ministry of Education, Vocational Training Centre, Ministry of Fisheries and Agriculture, Department of Civil Aviation and Airports Authority, Selected Islands Development Unit, Non-formal Education Unit, and Ministry of Atolls Administration. Documentation for the meeting consisted of annotated agendas for both sessions, as well as project summaries for each ongoing and pipeline project.

II. FINANCIAL DATA

5. During the first 24 months of the fourth country programme, 20 projects were approved and are currently under implementation. At present, the total of approved budgets during the fourth country programme period is $4,260,064. The total cost of the pipeline and ongoing projects for implementation during the period is $6,972,591. The value of the pipeline has been increased to allow for full delivery of IPF resources during the country programme period. Expenditures during the first two years were low, as few projects were in operation at the beginning of the programme period. In 1988, project delivery for both IPF and SMF projects was $627,622. In 1989, project delivery was estimated at $850,000. Four projects have been formulated with the use of funds totalling $85,000 from the Project Development Facility (PDF).

III. PROJECT DATA AND PROGRAMME IMPLEMENTATION

6. An analysis of the ongoing projects indicates that the country programme has remained consistent with the stated objectives both in substance and in the proportion of the available resources that were expected to be allocated to each objective. The average project size for Maldives is $200,000 for ongoing projects. The average size of pipeline projects, however, is $335,000. This is in keeping with the decision to fund fewer but larger projects to increase the impact of UNDP assistance. Of the 30 projects now under implementation, six are executed by the Government. The other 24 are distributed among 10 executing agencies of the United Nations system (the Department of Technical Co-operation for Development (DTCD), the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), the International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO), the International Labour Organisation (ILO), the Office for Project Services (OPS), the United Nations Centre for Human Settlements (Habitat) (UNCHS), the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD), the United Nations Volunteers (UNV), the World Health Organization (WHO), and the World Tourism Organization (WTO)). It is expected that national execution will increase in the years to come. Participants at the mid-term review did agree, however, that close attention must be paid in the near future to the respective roles of UNDP and the Government in this execution modality, and how best to prepare both organizations for their responsibilities.

7. At the project level, most of the new projects planned at the time of the approval of the country programme have been formulated and, at present, their implementation is well under way. There were, however, a few project ideas which eventually had to be dropped from the pipeline list, which the mid-term review

meeting confirmed. For the most part, those that were dropped had become redundant, with the planned activities carried out through other means. The present programme does include a number of projects the need for which was not clearly foreseen at the outset of the country programme. Some of these have evolved from pursuing the objectives of ongoing projects, particularly with respect to outer atoll development and skill development. Others have been formulated in response to developments outside the programme, particularly in the fields of environment and management improvement. It may be noted that all the new projects, though their need was not clearly recognized at the time of the country programme formulation, fell within the framework of the original programme objectives.

IV. PROGRAMME ANALYSIS

8. Within the framework of the country programme objectives, progress with respect to the selected programme issues was discussed. A summary follows.

Human resource development

9. Appropriate modalities of human resource development in the case of Maldives were considered during the review. At present, Maldives has a limited human resource base to provide staff for newly created institutions and, at least for the next ten years, also a limited demand for certain types of institution-based training. The problem of limited counterpart availability has been encountered with respect to vocational training, hotel training, and agricultural research. It was agreed that the proposed project in skills training (MDV/89/001) as well as the ongoing project for in-plant training of hotel staff (MDV/88/015) would provide a good opportunity to test the viability of mobile training. It was also recognized that regardless of the training process, all training programmes should, at the outset, establish the level of skill to be acquired.

Strengthening of economic base

10. Assistance is currently being provided through the country programme to support and strengthen the economic base through the traditional economic sectors of fisheries and tourism, as well as to promote new areas, such as handicrafts, horticulture, insurance, rural banking and machinery repair and maintenance. A joint UNDP/International Trade Centre (ITC) workshop series is planned to develop a specific programme of support to the private sector. The International Meteorological Organization (IMO) provides support in Maldives to seaman training, with support from the Norwegian Agency for International Development (NORAD). The participants in the mid-term review agreed that marine resources, and specifically mariculture, will be an important area for future support. This may be in the form of action research with a view to creating economic opportunities within the context of sustainable development.

Strengthening the economic and social infrastructure of the outer atolls

11. The country programme has thus far supported a number of activities designed to strengthen the economic and social infrastructure of the outer atolls. With the initiation of UNDP support to the Selected Island Development Unit (MDV/88/006), UNDP has also begun to assist in the planning of decentralization. In the first few months of this project, it became clear that an overall policy framework for decentralization planning is not well developed in Maldives. There seemed to be a lack of consensus as to the purpose of decentralization and, therefore, different opinions as to how to proceed, and where development should be concentrated. While the participants in the mid-term review meeting agreed that decentralization and the stimulation of growth in other areas of the country would increasingly be an important focus in Maldives, it was not clear how best to proceed with respect to the elaboration of a strategy for this. Careful thought will be required over the next few years.

Management and administration

12. The meeting was in agreement as to the potential value of the planned projects in management and administration; however, there was concern that the projects proceed carefully, with the full participation at all stages of the personnel of the ministries.

Women in development

13. The meeting agreed that there was a need for better data on the condition and aspirations of women in Maldives before planning further women-in-development initiatives. It was agreed that the planned United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM)-funded survey will cover both Malé and the atolls. The meeting also confirmed the need to clarify an enhanced role for the Department of Women's Affairs as an advocate for women's rights, within the government structure. It should be noted that the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) programme in Maldives provides essential support to the health care of women, through health education and child spacing services.

Private sector

14. The country programme provides support to the private sector through projects in hotel training, rural credit (through revolving funds in inter-atoll development programmes), fishing boat mechanization, rural banking in collaboration with the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD), handicraft promotion, reef-fish assessment, and skills development. It was agreed that the seminars with the private sector should continue as they provide a good forum for the participants to exchange views with government personnel as well as among themselves.

Environmental protection and population-carrying capacity

15. The environmental protection and population-carrying capacity of the islands came to be more keenly recognized during the country programme period. The meeting was informed that the environment planning and management action plan, developed during the UNDP/United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP)-sponsored environment workshop, would be officially cleared soon. Further actions in its implementation under both UNDP and other sources of assistance were discussed.

Collaboration with other assistance programmes

16. The effectiveness of the country programme was greatly enhanced through collaboration with other assistance programmes, both within and outside the United Nations system. In order to provide regularly scheduled opportunities for donor-government collaboration on specific subjects, the mid-term review agreed that small, informal meetings would be convened by UNDP in two to three areas in which a number of donors were active. The groups would be organized about once a month by UNDP, and be open to both Government and donor personnel. Interest groups would probably be organized in the areas of skills training, integrated atoll development and women in development.

Special Assistance Facility

17. During the last round-table meeting for Maldives in April 1989, the Government proposed that UNDP establish a Special Assistance Facility for Maldives. The meeting was informed that a trust fund had been established under UNDP rules and regulations. It was agreed that donors would be contacted both by the Government and UNDP to ascertain interest in using this facility. The meeting was particularly interested in the use of the facility for the channelling of funds allocated by donor embassies, especially as the identity of the donor would not be lost through this mechanism, but the funds could be joined with others to do larger, more complex projects than had been previously possible with this funding. The review meeting confirmed that good co-ordination of donor programmes would be important in order to ensure the overall effectiveness of external assistance activities for Maldives. This would be pursued through support to the round-table meeting process, in particular the agreed annual follow-up meetings to the April 1989 round-table meeting, the ongoing aid co-ordination project and more informal meetings in specific subject areas.

18. In addition to the programme issues discussed above, a separate session of the mid-term review was held on issues of project implementation. Ten projects were discussed specifically, to ascertain their status, and obtain the views of the concerned officials. Views of substantive ministry representatives on the following general issues were also obtained.

Government/UNDP dialogue during the project formulation phase

19. In order to design projects to take Maldives-specific issues into account as much as possible, a formulation/preparatory stage of two, to as much as six, months had been adopted for most of the projects. The meeting confirmed that this

approach had been effective and should be continued. Appreciation was particularly expressed for the procedure used in several of the formulation exercises, whereby a short project outline was presented to the concerned people within the relevant ministry, for their comments, before actual project document elaboration took place. This provided the opportunity for their input to be carefully considered before a great deal of effort was expended on detailed planning.

Training and institutional support

20. UNDP was often unable to provide all the financing necessary for ongoing training programmes in the areas in which projects were being implemented. This was a particularly important issue in Maldives, where much of the training at a professional and technical level would continue to take place outside the country for the foreseeable future in view of the small numbers involved. With respect to revenue-generating sectors, such as civil aviation and tourism, it was necessary to explore the possibility of government financing for continuing training for the staff. The need for government financing in these areas as well as others, including teacher training, was clearly recognized by participants in the mid-term review meeting, who also provided information on existing programmes under which out-of-country training was already being provided from the Government budget.

21. UNDP had provided United Nations Volunteers (UNV) specialists in several projects who performed in operational capacities within the Government as doctors, engineers, surveyors, and instructors. As two of these projects were drawing to a close in 1990, the capacity of the Government to carry on was specifically discussed. This led to the more general issue of the training components in these projects and whether the training provided was sufficient to enable the counterparts to take over fully the jobs of UNV specialists.

22. As a large number of projects had either recently ended or would end in the near future, the issue of how to effect a smooth transfer of responsibilities to the Government and how to derive maximum benefit from the information gathered and lessons learned during project implementation were specifically discussed. It was agreed that more post-project evaluations should be done, possibly with Development Support Services resources, as a way of elucidating lessons of past experience, and preparing for the fifth programming cycle.

V. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

23. The country programme has remained consistent with the originally stated objectives, both in substance and resource allocation. Further, analysis of the substantive aspects of the programme confirmed the continued relevance of the overall country programme framework and objectives. Thus, no further evaluation or revision of the present country programme is necessary for the remaining programme period.

24. With respect to resource management, the mid-term review meeting recommended that the implementation rate and delivery status be carefully monitored and that the expenditure level be controlled by rephasing project inputs to the fifth country programme, where such adjustment would be feasible. If necessary, however, borrowing against fifth cycle resources should be considered to avoid delays in priority projects.

25. The recommendations of the mid-term review with respect to programme implementation will be monitored throughout the remainder of the fourth country programme by the Government and UNDP.

FINANCIAL SUMMARY AS OF 14 MARCH 1990

I. RESOURCES TAKEN INTO ACCOUNT	At start of country programme	At time of MTR
IPF allocations (including third cycle carry-over +/-)	3 119 000	4 113 000
Government cost-sharing	-	-
Third-party cost-sharing	-	101 744
Subtotal of IPF-linked resources	3 119 000	4 214 744
Other funds under authority of Administrator (e.g. UNCDF, SPR, UNIFEM, UNFSTD, UNRFNRE, SMF)	514 800	1 237 700
Total resources taken into account	3 633 800	5 452 444

II. USE OF RESOURCES a/	At start of country programme	At time of MTR
Approved projects	870 000	4 260 064
Pipeline projects	2 140 000	2 712 527
Unprogrammed resources	623 800	-
Total	3 633 800	6 972 591

a/ IPF plus cost-sharing.